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CHURCH, SOCIETY, NATION, STATE IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIAN THINKING

“Any great philosophy ends up in platitude”¹. This was the warning issued by Constantin Noica to his disciples, gathered in the famous school of Păltiniș. Moreover, we may add, this platitude becomes defining and it is, more often than not, the only thing people remember from the work of a thinker. As far as historic research and other fields of the humanities are concerned, the result is the same. One of the most convincing examples is the way in which the Orthodox Church is regarded and understood in the West. It has long been considered an exotic product or, at its best, an expression of the Russian anti-West spirit. The Byzantine roots of Orthodoxy added to these perceptions. The Byzantine world had long been regarded from the pathetic perspective of the Turkish – Phanariot Balkanism. As a consequence, the scarce works of the western historians on the issues of the Eastern Church hesitated between condescension and a deconstructive approach. The numerous Russian intellectuals exiled in the West due to the Civil War and to the atheist communist regime contributed to a great, but not sufficient, extent to changing these views². The coming to power of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the fact that the entire Orthodox Church, except for the Greek one, became subordinated to Moscow, caused a new recoil in the attitude of the West towards the Eastern Church. The situation was worsened by Stalin’s intentions to create an “Orthodox International Corps”, which was to serve Kremlin’s politics and was to oppose the Vatican, which was considered to be an important ally of the “Anglo-American imperialists”³. This “collaborationism” of Orthodoxy with the communist regime turned into

¹ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 140. Constantin Noica (1909-1987) was an original thinker belonging to the intellectual generation which included figures such as Mircea Eliade, E.M. Cioran and Eugene Ionescu, but he chose to stay in Romania after the communist takeover when many others fled. Harassed and jailed for six years, Noica retreated to the mountains and gathered around him some brilliant young minds and future talent to challenge and nurture them in a time when communism denied them the materials of true intellectual importance.

² Jean Meyendorff, *Biserica Ortodoxă ieri și azi*, translated by Cătălin Lazurca, Bucharest, 1996, *passim*.

³ George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică. Studii și eseuri*, Bucharest, 2005, p. 155-156, 234-238; Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 21-65.

an obsession, a platitude from the perspective of which the entire history of the religion was reconsidered.

Today, things haven't changed, and, the history of the Orthodox Church in the modern and contemporary era is still a subject that awaits its researchers. Works of reference on this issue are still scarce and, in most cases, they are inconclusive as information and approach. Nevertheless, those studying the situation of orthodoxy refer to them, and, thus through successive simplification, a series of statements about the Orthodox Church is disseminated for the public opinion and they become definitive truths and common knowledge. One example is the book of René Rémond, *Religion and society in Europe. Secularisation in the 19th and 20th centuries. 1780 – 2004*⁴, where we find only a few lines about orthodoxy, whereas the other beliefs have vast and solid investigations. It is not about taking part, but we deal with a lack of information on problems of orthodoxy, the final bibliography clearly proving the affirmation. The real problem is that this kind of works become bibliography for the authors in the orthodox space, who, instead of investigating without prejudice and understanding the history of the Eastern Christianity based upon documents that have lately become accessible, do nothing more but repeat the same platitudes or guide their investigations according to them.

When carrying out research on the issues of the Orthodox Church it is absolutely necessary to understand what happened and avoid judging the past from the perspective of the present. Historiography of Marxist inspiration has turned the class struggle into the main issue of universal history and, from this perspective, it judges both the ancient Egyptians and the contemporary “imperialists”, generating a thesist, ideological and false history. Today, we deal with similar situations when it comes to current views of the human rights and to understanding religious freedom in the United States, which is now considered to be a general model. If nowadays we find it fair to consider the attitudes of a religion from the perspective of these values, we could hardly accept these as criteria that should apply to considering the entire history of a particular religion, including periods when the values were entirely different. Olivier Gillet's paper *Religion and Nationalism. The Ideology of the Romanian Orthodox Church under the Communist Regime*⁵ is a point in case. Basically, the author of Belgian religion attempts to establish the way in which the Romanian Orthodox Church accounted for its role during Communism and to draw a comparison with the doctrine promoted by the Patriarch of Moscow, Serghie. One of the drawbacks of the paper is the

⁴ Romanian translation by Giuliano Sfichi, Iassi, 2003.

⁵ Romanian translation by Mariana Petrișor, Bucharest, 2000.

exclusive use of official documents which conceal the major conflict between the representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Communist state. The paper loses even more credibility as it promotes generalisations and harshly criticises not only the Romanian Orthodoxy but also the entire Eastern Church, from the Byzantine period up to this day⁶. The Orthodox Church is intolerant, exclusivist but also obedient, nationalist and antidemocratic, as it favours authoritarian regimes. There seem to be no gaps to be filled, no hiatuses, no room for variety or change. This approach to history is unlikely to produce anything positive. The demonstration focuses on the comparison between the Romanian Orthodox Church under Communism and the Romanian Orthodox Church during the interwar period. This comparison is altogether wrong. Whereas after the year 1945 one standardising discourse was imposed by the communist power, the interwar period had been a time for great debates and a variety of replies. Gillet came to a false conclusion precisely because he had not looked into the documents of the interwar period. Instead, he had resorted to platitudes, many of which were initiated and promoted by the Communist historiography. He summarizes the interwar religious ideology as the opinions of the Legionary Movement or those promoted by Nichifor Crainic or Nae Ionescu in their works, these authors being considered the most extremist writers, without even having read their papers, resorting to different “comments” written in the Communist period. All the ideas of the two great thinkers are reduced to the idea shortly expressed as follows: “being Romanian means being Orthodox”. This statement becomes a fundamental element in proving the annexation of orthodoxy by nationalism. This is another error of the Belgian author. When two terms are related, we deal with the relation between the two. Gillet’s nationalism is the main term and the situation of the church is discussed from this perspective. Denying it, the representatives of the church, be they clergymen or laic ones, considered the church as the most important and they brought forward all the issues considering this perspective.

The unification of Romania allowed the unification of the various parts of Romanian Orthodoxy, by the creation of the Romanian Patriarchy in 1925, the second one in importance as number of believers in the orthodox world. The coming to power of Communism East of Dneestr increased the importance of the Romanian Church in the orthodox space, a part which was considered to be a great responsibility to be assumed⁷, as the values of

⁶ See my review for Gillet’s book published in „Analele Universității «Dunărea de Jos» Galați, fascicula 19, Istorie”, 1, 2002, p. 202 – 218.

⁷ During this period we remind the reader about the major part of the Romanian rulers who supported the orthodox believers of the Ottoman Empire, Poland and Ukraine. A major part is played by metropolitan Petru Movilă, who was seen as a promoter of the idea of keeping

orthodoxy had to be preserved and promoted all over the world, in a trial to prevent the rise of atheist communism West of Dneestr.

Was the Romanian Orthodox Church able to assume such responsibility? This is a question that had long preoccupied the interwar conscious of Romanians, and the doubts relied on the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church could be a distinctive voice within the Romanian society and not a mere servant of the laic state. Still, there was no encouraging element to be taken into account. The Orthodox Church had become a church of state during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, in the Old Kingdom⁸. The secularisation of church's wealth was doubled by a strict control from the state. This attitude was no longer tolerated after 1918. One of the causes for these changes in attitude was the increase in number of believers coming from different other churches and, especially, the imposing presence of Orthodoxy in Transylvania, which benefited from the autonomy obtained by the great metropolitan Andrei Saguna, playing a major part in defending the national cultural values which were constantly under attack from the Austrian Hungarian dualist regime. The importance of Transylvanian orthodoxy is made relevant by the appointment as first patriarch of Romania of the Transylvanian Miron Cristea whose main concern was to increase as much as possible the autonomy of the Romanian Orthodox Church⁹. However, the greatest supporter of this idea was the metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Balan. As he strongly believed that "Christ cannot be subordinated to any worldly power"¹⁰, the Romanian metropolitan was a firm supporter of the inalienable right of the church to organise and run its entire clerical and administrative life. The church will therefore be driven by the awareness of its responsibility for its spiritual mission and will become an active institution which has the support of people and cannot be submitted to any political power. Otherwise, "a church submitted to the worldly powers gives up its own principles"¹¹.

This kind of autonomy needed justification and support through powerful, coherent and permanent action taken by the church onto society.

the faith unity, beyond ethnic differences. The interest shown for the struggle of believers inside the USSR is also present, and information about the events in the East of Dneestr periodically appears in the press of the church.

⁸ See Mircea Pacurariu's, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1997, p. 80 – 407 for supplementary data concerning the church life before 1918.

⁹ Ioan Lupaş, *Activitatea socială a Patriarhului Miron*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, year XLI (1938), no. 4, p. 29.

¹⁰ I.P.S. Nicolae, *Un scurt cuvânt despre autonomia Bisericii*, in „Parlamentul românesc”, year VI, no. 168-170, 20.04.1935, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

Two terms became necessary: on the one hand, there had to be a well-taught clergy who would not give up Jesus under any circumstances; on the other hand, the church needed a well structured message. As far as the clergy is concerned, there was, throughout the interwar period, a continual concern for their moral and cultural education. One of the key elements, as far as theological education is concerned, is the subordination of ecclesiastical seminaries and theology faculties to the church¹². Only those youngsters who had a calling for priesthood were to enter these institutions with a monastery-like way of life, their humanistic culture being intended to harmoniously blend with the teachings of the Holy Fathers. During this period, theological education is exemplified by a series of great personalities of the orthodox spirituality, amongst which Dumitru Stăniloae is the most outstanding figure¹³. Renewal was the main feature, not only of the higher education, but also of any parish. The creation of parish libraries, the publishing an impressive amount of magazines and brochures for believers and the foundation of many missionary associations are elements meant to outline the wide part played by the priest in the social life. Vartolomeu Stănescu, bishop of Râmnic, was a great promoter of these tendencies, creating the association named "Renașterea" (The Resurrection) for the priests of his eparchy. The association had a remarkable missionary and cultural role, as it required every parish to have its own library and quire. Moreover, he created the Popular Bank "Ajutorul" (The Aid), by means of which he supported retired priests and the missionary and cultural work in his eparchy. This diligent bishop's work was mentioned as one of his closest assistants was Justinian Marina who, in 1948, was to become Romania's Patriarch and, although he came to power with the help of the Communist Party, he would try to carry on the work of Vartolomeu Stănescu¹⁴.

Was the message of the church adapted to the issues of the day, if we were not to consider their work, abnegation and the personal example of

¹² This was not completed during the interwar due to the opposition of the political power but it would be a strong wish that was to be reiterated on every occasion (see George Enache, *op. cit.* p. 123 - 126). Nichifor Crainic's approach on the way the future of theological education was seen at the time is very useful in his book *Zile albe, zile negre. Memorii*, vol. 1, Bucharest, 1991. Other books dealing with this topic: Mihai Burlacu (*Reorganizarea învățământului teologic*, Bucharest, 1938, 97 p.) and the leaflet of the Huși bishop, Grigore Leu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română. Situația actuală a pregătirii clerului*, Bucharest, 1929, *passim*. Here, the future martyr of the church (he was forced to leave his position and then, he was poisoned for standing up against the communists) argues about the necessity of a "church of the people", and that "its servants must be worthy of their mission." (p. 6).

¹³ About the Romanians theologians of the era, see Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, Bucharest, 2002.

¹⁴ George Enache, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

these clergymen? According to another current platitude present in the history of the Orthodox Church, it is static and stiff, promoting obsolete rites as it is unable to provide us an answer to the problems of the world other than praying. For some hastened lecturers of the interwar texts, the recurrence of the concept of “tradition” and the permanent appeal to the teachings of the Holy Fathers represent arguments. They could not understand this concept which is fundamental for the interwar Romanian theological ideology. Paradoxical as it may seem, Nae Ionescu¹⁵, Nichifor Crainic¹⁶, George Racoveanu¹⁷, Ștefan Bogdan¹⁸, Romulus Cârdea¹⁹, Sandu Tudor²⁰, Dumitru Stăniloae²¹ turned it into the key element for the rebirth of Orthodoxy in the modern age. The Church tradition guarantees the truthfulness of the Christian message, which is everlasting, and is always likely to offer the most appropriate answers to any generation of believers. One of the most important problems of mankind at the beginning of the 20th century was represented by social justice, and the Romanian Orthodox Church offered the most convincing answers, under the sign of the so-called social Christianity. Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu²², Ștefan Bogdan²³, N.T. Buzea²⁴, Ion Nestor²⁵, V.G. Ispir²⁶, Dumitru Stăniloae²⁷, Teodor M. Popescu²⁸ and many others are worth mentioning. Ștefan Bogdan, for instance, that only the Church can find the cue for all the evil present in our society. According to the author, the Christian social doctrine relied on the respect for life and for the property of our fellow-men and, above all, on charity. Therefore, we have the

¹⁵ Nae Ionescu, *Ce e Predania?* in *Predania și un Îndreptar ortodox cu, de și despre Nae Ionescu teolog*, anthology by Ioan I. Ică jr., Sibiu, 2001, p. 25-27.

¹⁶ Nichifor Crainic, *Sensul tradiției* in Iordan Chimet (ed.), *Dreptul la memorie*, vol. 4, Cluj-Napoca, 1993, p. 168-186.

¹⁷ George Racoveanu, *Mișcarea Legionară și Biserica*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 17-24.

¹⁸ Ștefan Bogdan, *Biserica și viața socială*, in *Biserica și problemele sociale*, Bucharest, 1933, p. 31-48.

¹⁹ Romulus Cârdea, *Biserica Ortodoxă și tradiția națională*, in *Probleme actuale în Biserica și Stat*, Bucharest, 1935, p. 57-79.

²⁰ George Enache, *op.cit.*, p. 452-498, 537.

²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Națiune și creștinism*, anthology by Constantin Schifirneț, Bucharest, 2003, p. 123-133.

²² Episcop Vartolomeu Stănescu, *Scurte încercări de creștinism social*, Bucharest, 1913, 132 p.; idem, *Femeia ca factor social*, 2nd edition, Râmnicu Vâlcea, 1936, 125 p.

²³ Ștefan Bogdan, *op.cit.*, p. 31-48.

²⁴ N.T. Buzea, *Socialismul și creștinismul social*, Bucharest, 1925, 106 p.

²⁵ Ion Nistor, *Rostul politic și social al Bisericii în trecut și în prezent*, in *Biserica și problemele sociale*, Bucharest, 1933, p. 167-190.

²⁶ V.G. Ispir, *Misiunea creștină în România nouă* in *ibidem*, p. 191-228.

²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 45-50, 52-59, 74-95, 107-108, 174-177.

²⁸ Teodor M. Popescu, *Ce reprezintă azi Biserica Ortodoxă*, Bucharest, 1941, 32 p.

commandments: “love one another, share thy wealth with the poor, do not covet somebody else’s property and forgive the ones who did you harm, always take the last place and always turn the other cheek”²⁹. The author’s conclusion is a simple one: “At all times, whenever the word of Jesus was replaced by the name of the National God in the social life of peoples and in the politics of the States, the wildest war for enriching industry and commerce of the state began”³⁰. Consequently, there is a social injustice in the capitalist world, and all the criticism brought forth by socialism is just. Peace among men cannot be reached through the stripping to the skin of the rich, that is, of the hardworking men, to favour the poor who are, more often than not, vicious and lazy. Christianity does not promote equality of all people in terms of material wealth; there is only one way to achieve equality, that is, through virtue. The rightful ones make proof of no virtue unless they have sympathy for the poor³¹. This kind of fraternity was labelled by N.T. Buzea as moral communism, which is to oppose material communism³². However, moral communism springs from psychological individualism, which Christianity explains as “the assertion of the best, of the most useful, elevating and comprehensive elements in any human being”³³. The goal of Christianity is achieved through the individual and it is meant for people, who gather in Christian communities built on love and faith. As a result, it is not by compelling people to socialize that we can solve the problems of mankind; it is by bringing about moral change of the individual. The sharing of all goods during the first centuries of Christianity was an act of free will for the followers of Christ.

As a conclusion, the Romanian interwar theologians and intellectuals considered the value of Christian religion and the social role of the church as essential. The issue was to whom they were trying to get the message across. It dealt with the delicate and controversial field of the relation between nation and Christianity³⁴. The topic is far too complex and cannot be analyzed here, but we must emphasize the diversity of opinions adopted. The idea supported

²⁹ Ștefan Bogdan, *op.cit.*, p. 39-42.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 42-43.

³² N.T. Buzea, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³⁴ Constantin Schifirneț, *Geneza modernă a ideii naționale*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 435-570; Jordan Chimet (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. IV; *Probleme actuale în Biserică și Stat*, Bucharest, 1935; *Biserica și problemele sociale*, Bucharest, 1933; Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*; idem, *Ortodoxie și românism*, 2nd edition, Bucharest, 1998; *Predania și un Îndreptar ortodox cu, de și despre Nae Ionescu teolog*, anthology by Ioan I. Ică jr., Sibiu, 2001; Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație*, 2nd edition, Bucharest, 1997; Nicolae Popescu Prahova, *Creștinism și națiune. Patrie și religiune*, Bucharest, 1941.

by some authors according to whom orthodoxy (as a whole) was a means of promoting aggressive nationalism and ethnic intolerance requires alterations. As far as the Romania is concerned, the relation between orthodoxy and the state was analyzed both and laymen and by clergymen. The former were preoccupied with the identity profile of the Romanian nation, as religion became one of the fundamental elements, while the latter would use this relation as further argument to promote the orthodox faith in society, as the historic argument is well known to render people sensitive. The degree of integration of the two notions varied a lot. The Legionary Movement suggested, somehow, that, when it came to power, it would impose on all Romanians a lifestyle following the values of the Christian religion (not necessarily the orthodox one, as many Greek-Catholic believers joined the Legionary Movement)³⁵. Moreover, the deep relation between orthodoxy and the Romanian spirit established by Dumitru Stăniloae, Nae Ionescu or Nichifor Crainic did not become a part of the orthodox ecclesiastology, not being able to surpass the stage of a theoretic vision, although voices demanded that the church should involve more in the creation of an authentic national state. It is well known that the body of the church is formed by hierarchs, clergymen and the people. Still, George Racoveanu stated that “when a part of the whole has its own organization in order to reach a goal, the said part would change – each individual of the new group becomes exactly that which the structure of the society decides. When the new community promotes a conception about the world which opposes Christianity, acting in its own right, the conflict is initiated”³⁶. Many theologians became aware of the separations which occurred during the modern age between the church and the nation, on one hand, and between the church and the state, on the other hand. However they avoided giving solutions which may be similar to the fundamentalist Islamism of today. They reassess the fact that, traditionally, orthodoxy is divided into national churches, but this should have nothing to do with nationalism, since the church addresses everybody. The organization of the church establishes the ideal balance between the national and the internationalist aspirations. This organization is the most appropriate way of expressing unity within diversity and of adapting the Christian message so that it may get across to all nations, natural entities, accepted by God³⁷. The fact that the Romanians were

³⁵ Leaving aside all the doctrinaire works of the Legionary Movement’s leaders, the most radical vision on the relation between the church and the Iron Guard belongs to Ilie Imbrescu, *Apostrofa unui teolog. Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară*, Bucharest, 1940, 255 p.

³⁶ George Racoveanu, *op.cit.*, p. 17-18.

³⁷ Brilliant idea developed by Dumitru Stăniloae (see Constantin Schifirneț, *op.cit.*, p. 483-510).

traditionally orthodox can never be ignored, but the role of the church as national defender of national ideas was only played at a particular stage in history; otherwise these functions should be carried out by political factors³⁸. The church must remain the defender of spiritual life on earth and the bearer of eternal Christian truths. It is precisely due to its moral part that it becomes involved in the sound development of society and of the nation³⁹.

Obviously, the Church interferes with the actions of the state, conflicts arising from this clash, although it has often been emphasized that there should be no competition between the state and the church as long as the two institutions have the same goal: the welfare of the social body. The two should not act separately (all authors reject the idea of separating church from state) but no power should rise above the other. The intention of Popes to rule over the secular power is condemned and the domination of the state over the church should stop. The two institutions should act together, completing each other⁴⁰. Trying to define the idea of autonomy, metropolitan Bălan stated that “the functions of the state originate in the external need, from a physical and economic point of view and evolve gradually, with mankind, from the inside towards the outside, in the field of spiritual interests. As the functions of the state invade the spiritual area, they must gradually temperate their coercive feature, as this represents a brand new field, which is church’s area”⁴¹. Consequently, human existence has different levels, more or less covered by the state or by the church. The Christian ethics is completed by the law of the state. The law will draw exterior borders for the human abuse, whereas the church will draw interior ones. It is obvious that law and ethics should be complementary⁴². The law should help people find the right way without restricting human freedom. This complementarity between the state and the church has been overrated by many authors. This means that the state should protect the Orthodox Church, by its

³⁸ Romulus Căndea, *op.cit.*, p. 76-78.

³⁹ See Nicolae Popescu Prahova, *op.cit.*, p. 30-42.

⁴⁰ Teodor M. Popescu in *Misiunea creștină a statului* (in *Probleme actuale în Biserică și Stat*, Bucharest, 1935, p. 103-142), has a very interesting approach underlining that, along the history, the mission of the two institutions interfered, and, even considering modern laicization, there is still a great number of believers the state must take into account. The official position of the state is expressed by Alexandru Lapedatu, minister of Cults, in *Statul și biserica* in „Parlamentul Românesc”, year VI, no. 168-170, 20.04. 1935, p. 4-5. Also see George Enache, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

⁴¹ Nicolae Bălan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴² See Valeriu Iordăchescu, *Forța și dreptul în Biserică și problemele sociale*, Bucharest, 1933, p. 127-146; Dumitru Stăniloae, *Cele două împărății*, in *op.cit.*, 1998, p. 121-178.

administrative means, from proselytism actions of other religious cults (especially the neo protestant ones)⁴³.

Unfortunately, no author considered the alternative of a state that is hostile to the faith, as it happened in 1945, a fact that turned into a great handicap and prevented the creation of an efficient opposition for the communism from happening. Considering the necessary complementarity of the religious and politic domains, the final result shows that if politics turns against the people, the church should react. As the attitude, as far as politics is concerned, was diverse during the interwar period in Romania, opinions concerning the degree of involving the church in politics varied⁴⁴.

Many priests were party members and were involved in the electoral process. Still, the politic life in Romania during this period was not a fair one. Numerous abuses would turn the result of the election, and priests were instruments of propaganda in the countryside⁴⁵. This is one of the reasons why the clergy joined forces with the Legionary Movement, a force that promoted the Christian ethics. This was the decisive argument for the authorities that demanded the Holy Synod that the priests should not be involved in politics. It was not possible, as the general opinion favoured the priests in exercising their civil rights⁴⁶. In exchange, it was suggested that the

⁴³ See V. Ispir, *Sectologie*, part two, *Istoricul sectelor*, București, 1937, *passim*.

⁴⁴ The daily publication „Curentul” initiated in 1937 a public debate on the theme concerning the involvement of the clergy in politics. The answers given by people in the street varied a lot.

⁴⁵ George Enache, *op.cit.*, p. 176-185.

⁴⁶ There were many interventions and they reached their peak in 1937, as a consequence of the immense procession that lead legionaries Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, killed in the civil war of Spain, on their last road. The Holy Synod rejected the encroachment of the political power, which made Nae Ionescu write an enthusiastic article, *Biserică, Stat și Națiune* (in *Predania și un Îndreptar ortodox cu, de și despre Nae Ionescu teolog*, anthology by Ioan I. Ică jr., Sibiu, 2001, p. 57-59). The Holy Synod communicated the following: „The Church has its own conception on existence and – according to it – an ethical program for human life. It will not interfere in the political life and will not favour any party, as long as they will not move away from the method and will not come in conflict with the ethical program of the Church. Nevertheless, it has the right to intensify its actions in order to deepen the Christian vision of the Romanian people, including the political parties, and even to take action against those activities that, under the mask of politics, promote life conceptions and ethical programs, that oppose Christianity. Our state is a Romanian state, created, with great sacrifices, by the Romanian nation in order to preserve, strengthen and render it noble, having as goal the development of both its physical and spiritual features, so that it may rise to its outmost political and spiritual prestige. All state laws, actions and ideas are meant to be subordinated to a sustainable welfare of the nation, or at least to preserve it without causing any damage. The activities of the state will not be accomplished to satisfy the pleasures and momentary ambitions of the greedy or of the demagogically incited masses, but for the everlasting good of the people.” (*Ibidem*, p. 56).

priest should be a civic model, one who does not take political sides and who must help eliminate politicianism and who must bring forth a civic spirit, who should defend free conscious and the rights of the church⁴⁷. Consequently, the degree of involvement of the church in politics was to vary according to the threat coming from a political power that rose against the freedom of the people and of the church.

These lines could be completed with many dark parts: affiliation of church representatives to the extremist nationalism, obedience towards the state, equivocal attitudes concerning “the real national state”, shortcomings in the organization of church life and in the missionary activity. If the statement that the Romanian Orthodox Church had many drawbacks in the interwar period is true, then, it is also true the fact that it always presented its will of renewal and to adapt the eternal message of Christ to the necessities of the time in order to spread the divine word. The missionary spirit of the age was one of the main reasons why The Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria was created, a place where the word of God was transmitted to every orthodox person, regardless of nationality.

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⁴⁷ Ștefan Bogdan, *op.cit.*, p. 37-38; *Preoții și politica*, in „Păstorul ortodox”, an XV, no. 5, May 1934, p. 25-29; *Adresa Sfântului Sinod no. 1885/1936* in „Apostolul”, an XVII, no. 51, November 1936, p. 24, 30.